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WHY THE WAR MUST GO ON.

HODDER & STOUGHTON
LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO
1917.

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WHY THE WAR MUST GO ON.

How does the war stand? How long must it go on?

Every soldier who fights at the front, every civilian who waits at home, every neutral observer, even, all the world over, has the right, at each stage in the war, to ask himself that question.

To ask it is not necessarily to show a weakening of determination, an uncertainty of aim, or doubt as to the final issue. Simply, it means that, every now and then, watchers and fighters, sufferers and workers, desire to take a bird's eye view of the situation; to estimate the chances; to judge how far we may be upon the long road leading towards light.

Why, then, does the war go on?

Because there is as yet no common basis for discussion. Because, to lead to such basis of discussion, the sincere will does not exist in our enemy. Because his "will to peace" is not a will to any peace *we* can accept.

Let us not be misunderstood. The Kaiser has "offered" peace. He has spoken of a settlement. But he speaks only through the voice of a Government that has never yet spoken but to deceive. His peace offer is a signal and symptom of distress within Germany, not a solid basis for a discussion of peace terms.

Germany, we say, desires peace. She has told us so much in her own arrogant manner. Her Prus-

sian Government has allowed her socialists to clamour for it. Her newspapers announce it. Her big men continually promise it for the near future. Her Kaiser is always the first to prophesy it. And each new effort that Prussia has made, since the days of Verdun and before, has been proclaimed as the *last* effort. Always the files of docile soldiers have been driven by Prussia to their deaths with that hope in their hearts—a *last* blow, a *last* offensive, the stroke that is to settle it all.

But how settle it? In what sense?

By bringing France to her knees, or by destroying British sea-power. By starving Britain, or by reaching Paris.

For more than two years now—indeed we may say, since the Marne—it is the same story: a last great stroke to bring victory. Then a peace which shall satisfy German greed. Then the division of spoils. Then the rich coal-fields of France. Then huge indemnities from the Allies. Then "guarantees" for the future. Finally a German Belgium, with Germany at Antwerp, organising her piracies for that "next war" which (as German children are now being told in their schools) will be designed to hold and to extend the conquests made in this one.

That briefly is the peace the German Government at least has wanted since the Marne. Since the immortal story of Verdun, they have wanted it indeed with an ever-growing intensity of expectation. As the blockade tightens, they want it, an

American long amongst them has said, "madly." But the peace they so madly want is *their* peace still.

What evidence is there, first, that the German Government, or governing classes, then, that the German people have any other peace in mind?

Hindenburg and Reventlow, the Junkers and extremists have openly declared that they still count upon indemnities; and Mr. Gerard's revelations in the *Daily Telegraph* have shown that, in January, 1917, Bethmann-Hollweg was still demanding what amounted to a permanent German occupation of Belgium. With such men, it goes without saying, we need not and cannot talk.

What next about the moderates (so-called), the Social Democrats and the German people?

They, it is known, have recently precipitated a crisis and demanded from their Government a declaration of the policy of "no annexations and no indemnities." The resignation of the German Chancellor, the suppression of Maximilian Harden's now pacific paper, recently re-established, the silencing even of such "moderates" as Captain Persius and the ex-Colonial Minister Dernburg show what the German Government thinks of such a demand.

They reject it absolutely.

But even if they did not reject it—even if the party of "no annexations and no indemnities" were to win the day—what would a peace made by them mean? Could we accept it? Could we trust them? Could we be sure that they had not the Prussian

Government behind them?—that the Junkers were not using them to cover their real war aims?

In other words, what is the war record of the "no annexations" party and of the German Social Democrats in general?

Before the war, Prince Bülow in his book on "Imperial Germany" expressed his fears that, in the event of a European conflict, the Social Democrats would prove traitors to their country; by which he meant that they would fail to fall into line with the aggressive onslaught upon European liberty. He was agreeably surprised.

At the first call of the trumpet, the German social democratic party gladly adopted the legend of *la patrie en danger* for the Fatherland. After having been told many times that Russia was a country to be despised in a military sense, they professed a panic in face of Russia. Gladly they marched, as the rest did; and in the second edition of his book, Prince Bülow made them the *amende honorable* and told them that they had behaved better than he had expected. For the rest, other people had foreseen, more clearly than Prince Bülow, what the social-democrats would do Already, before the war, they had shown what was to be expected of them.

Not to return too far upon the past, their attitude had been disclosed from the day in June 1913 when they voted with the rest of the world the exorbitant military law of that year; and they continued in this policy until the eve of the war itself, when, after vague academic declamations as to the peoples of

Europe being the innocent victims of war, the central organ of the German Social Democrats, the *Vorwaerts*, amused itself by calling William II. a "sincere partisan of the peace of the peoples"; while the leaders of the party denounced the "imperialism" of the French Republic, the greed of England, and the barbarism of Russia.

All because Austria, backed by Germany, was trying to conquer Serbia! All because Germany, openly boasting of the "wrong she was committing," was invading Belgium!

But was this, by chance, an access of the terror that overcomes all reason?

Was it an attack of chauvinism, caught from the rest of the country, at a time when the German people, in common with their Government, were rushing into the "merry little war" anticipated for forty years?

Far from it. The German socialists had time to think things over, and, as the war went on, they did not vary in their views.

Basing his approval on alleged terrors of the "triumph of Russian despotism"—terms that came oddly, we repeat, from men trained to despise Russian armed force as a delusion—Herr Haase, President of the Parliamentary Social Democratic group, declared that in the hour of "peril"—the peril of the armed robber entering his neighbour's house—he and his could not leave their country in the lurch; and the socialists gladly voted the credits of war in the midst of universal acclamations.

Says the *Vorwaerts* of the 6th August, 1914:—

"Everybody stood up, applauded and cheered."

Four months later, the whole socialist group (except Karl Liebknecht) voted the new measures proposed by the Imperial Government. More, none amongst them protested against the atrocities of German warfare—against Louvain and Malines, against Senlis and Rheims, against women outraged and children slain. On the contrary, the socialists, through Haase, at this stage addressed their "congratulations" to the brave defenders of Germany, who had just "defended" their homes by ravaging the homes of their brothers across the frontier.

Why continue?

Throughout the war, so long as success came to Germany, so long as there was the faintest hope of a final triumph for the German cause, the German Social Democrats followed obediently in the tracks of Moloch's car, as jackals follow the lion, to share in the remnants of the feast. And as no German body can act, however inconsistently, however dishonestly, without giving itself sufficient metaphysical and transcendental reasons for its action, so, after the beginning of war and plunder, of rapine and brutality, the metaphysical formula for the justification of force was given in the *Sozialistische Monatshefte* by M. Paul Hirsch (4th August, 1914).

> It is certain that by voting these credits we have shown the Government a special mark of our confidence, which the Party certainly could not have extended to it in normal times. But at such a moment as this, when national unity is at

stake, it was quite impossible for anyone who is influenced by practical rather than tactical considerations to commit himself, by rejecting their proposals, to a vote of no-confidence in the Government on the ground of their internal policy. By adopting such an attitude as this, the Socialist group in the Prussian Chamber would not merely have dealt the severest blow to the interests of Labour, but would have weakened the Fatherland in the face of its enemies. High as we place the idea of international solidarity, we place still higher the good of our own country, the economic aggrandisement of our people. The greater our economic power as a nation, the stronger also will be the foundations of the modern labour movement. It is the guarantee of civilisation in the future. The most dangerous of our adversaries, England, counts on the economic starvation of Germany. This calculation will be upset, it will beat and break against the solid commonsense of the nation, which does not hesitate, when the country's salvation is at stake, to rise above party questions, nor to shrink from the bitterest sacrifices.

Those quotations sum up the whole attitude of the socialists in Germany during the war.

Socialism—yes; but Socialism as understood by Germany—imperialistic socialism, socialism as "we" recognise it, administered by the sword to others. In fact, a democratic form of Kultur, using the German Imperial Government as a means of spreading itself over Europe. The proletariat of

Europe shall be happy, but it must receive its happiness at the hands of the German working-class. In other words, an old story—*sois mon frère ou je te tue!*

And that there may be no mistake, let us add the testimony of the deputy, Wolfgang Heine, who at Stuttgart in February, 1915, in a speech quoted and applauded all over Germany, spoke as follows:

> Before peace can be seriously thought of, there should be further enlightenment on the situation of the war. We have every confidence in the German armies and the nation at war: its achievements command our respect and admiration. Out there, there is not one soldier who would not welcome peace as soon as possible, and yet each man does his duty with heroism and sacrifice. The Army and the People are one, and we, too, should follow the example set by our fighting heroes.
>
> Then, too, our hopes of peace may confidently repose in the will for peace of our peace-loving Emperor. Everyone knows that twice in the last few years he has given proof of it at a critical time, twice his personal intervention has, so to speak, come to the rescue of Peace.
>
> The working classes are attached to the nation in the closest possible way by their desire to share in the nation's spiritual culture and economic solidarity, unshakable despite all the conflicts of class interests. If German industry were destroyed, the workers would suffer like their employers, even more indeed, than the latter.

The workman is bound also to the State in spite of all its imperfections and conflicting interests. The workman is a part of the German people and at this time of war he feels more than ever that his country's destiny is his own.

And the speaker ended by assuring his hearers that after the war the attitude of the Social Democrats would be the same.

* * * * *

Since then much has happened, and nothing has happened.

In the field, Germany's victory on the old lines of annexation, compensation and indemnity, has become impossible. The German ruling class may not see it. The socialists do. And the socialists, in seeing it, merely register a fact and conform their views to it. And what a fact! A fact of relief for all the world, brought about by the allied effort, and, especially, by the immortal struggle of the French people in arms. Since Verdun, slowly, the hopes of the Germans have sunk, only to be periodically galvanised anew by illusory expectations of U-boats, of Russian peace, of Rumanian corn. Hopes sink gradually, with these occasional returns. And the result is that to-day, in the summer and autumn of 1917, the German Social Democrats want a peace marking a "defensive victory" only.

What is this "defensive victory," now being urged by them?

Could we accept it?

We do not know what it is, because they take

pains not to state its terms. But briefly—and vaguely—its formula is one already quoted: "no annexations, no indemnities."

As to that, one thing may be said with certainty. Such a peace would mean victory for Germany. Not indeed the victory they set out to gain in the "joyful" onslaught of 1914, but a victory still. *And this the social-democrats themselves admit.* The *Vorwaerts* lately wrote:

> It is our duty to win. But there is no question of a victory of annihilation and conquest; even if such a victory were desirable, it would not be attainable in the face of ten times superior forces. Victory for us is a question of self-preservation and self-defence—such a victory, given the existing balance of power, as will satisfy the claims of honour and justice for our Fatherland. If nine-tenths of the German people are convinced that the road to this indispensable victory is barred by obstacles traceable to the internal arrangements of our Constitution, could anyone have the wish or the power to prevent their removal?

Thus we see what the aim of the moderates first, and with them of the Social Democrats, really is—peace certainly; reform, certainly; but reform leading to victory: peace; but a peace registering the "duty to conquer." And if the German Social Democrats, at this moment, call for reform within Germany, it is only that they hope by such reform to secure a "broader" victory, in which their party

shall share. Thus the other day, the *Vorwaerts* again:

"If Germany is governed democratically, not only will she increase her defensive power for the last stages of the world-war, not only will she see her way clearly to peace at an earlier date, but she will find herself in a better position in regard to future peace negotiations."

For the rest, the Social Democrats long since condoned the action of the Prussian Government. Here, summing up their doctrine, is what the Social Democrat Heine said on the 19th June last:—

"When a war comes, a people has nothing to do except look after measures of protection. It is of little moment to know who is responsible for the war. The formula by which wars of aggression are to be condemned, and defensive wars to be justified, is a formula which has no significance."

"A better condition in regard to future negotiations of peace"—that is just it! A "peace offensive!"

But suppose, now, this same "peace offensive" over, and peace signed on "the basis of 1914"—that is, the *status quo*.

Germany would still be victorious.

With her territory untouched, her lands and homes unspoiled, she would have for herself none of the work of painful restoration and reconstruction facing France, Belgium, Poland, Serbia, Rumania, and Russia. Her mercantile marine would take up the carrying trade that belonged to the ships she has sunk. Her influence upon the

Near East, partly veiled before the war, would be complete and cynically shown. Her shadow and slave, Austria, would be doomed, in the nature of things, to be more than ever her slave and shadow. Enfeebled Belgium would be a prey to her economic propaganda. In essence, if not in form, the great predatory vision of Mittel-Europa would be realised. Yet this peace—"defensive victory"—is the only peace offered by the mildest and most moderate of Germans! And even this peace the actual German Government would not for a moment dream of granting!

But though it would be a dangerous error to confound the "peace without annexations" wanted by the Social Democrats with the permanent European peace wanted by the Allies, we need not deny the importance of their rôle in the recent comedy of repentances and good resolutions known as the Stockholm Conference, and the "one-sided" peace offer to Russia. Whenever the situation grows dark for Germany, the German Social Democrats advance towards the centre of the scene. They are allowed to speak more boldly. Particularly do they raise their voices when it is a question of detaching one of the allies. Then, when such efforts appear vain, these tools or victims of Prussian autocracy disappear to their meditations in private. Thus we have just seen Erzberger and others protesting against the *guerre à outrance*. With what result? That Kaiser and Kronprinz, Ludendorff and Hindenburg, take the field again and that Erzberger's protest falls to the ground unheeded.

For the rest, this same Erzberger was, in 1914, one of the loudest to express contempt for the allied effort in general, and for the British Army in particular.

* * * * *

The war, then, must go on till we defeat the party of plunder. But for how long? Is that defeat far off?

One hopeful fact emerges, after all reasoning, in regard to the present situation.

It is this: Germany's growing need of peace is shown by her continuous intriguing for peace; and this intriguing is a symptom of her nearness to the end.

How fatal a mistake, then, would it be to misinterpret these peace intrigues as a return of goodwill or a repentance for what Germany has done! Because, indeed, such misinterpretation would thus lead France and the Allies to throw away with one hand all they had gained with the other. With their brave right hand, they have seized the predatory powers by the throat; they hold them; and Prussia turns in vain hither and thither, seeking for an issue. She can and will find none, if we do not weaken our grip. The wrestlers are in the last rounds. The Allies are at the 18th. Two more rounds, a final twist of the hand: Germany will be down and out. Meanwhile, the Kaiser, the Kronprinz, the Junkers have declared for more war. *Soit.* The war must go on.

It must go on because we have nearly won it.

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